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THE END OF THE BRITISH REGIME IN MICHIGAN AND THE NORTHWEST

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THE War for American Independence came to its official close with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783. This treaty stipulated that the boundary of the Old Northwest, between the United States and British North America, should follow generally the middle of the Great Lakes and their connecting rivers. Nevertheless, England continued to maintain sizable garrisons at Detroit and Michilimackinac (now Mackinaw), and to hold a decided ascendancy over the Indians and the fur trade south of the Great Lakes until the Jay Treaty put an end to this *de facto* control in 1796. The region under consideration to the south of the Great Lakes is known in history as the Old Northwest. It was in this very territory that Britain held the most strategic posts—most strategic from the political view as these gave her a commanding influence over the Indians, or a possible foothold for further expansion; and most strategic indeed from the economic standpoint, because they were the western emporiums of the fur trade. Again, it was in the Old Northwest where the forces developed “in the womb of time” which, to a large degree, forced England finally to accede to the boundary agreed upon by the Treaty of Paris.

When the news was announced that the provisional peace had been signed, bringing the War for American Independence to an end, the post officials in the Old Northwest were greatly disturbed over the Indian situation which confronted them. Colonel

Arent S. De Peyster, commandant at Detroit, wrote:

We are all in expectation of news. Everything that is bad is spread through the Indian country—but as I have nothing more than the Kings Proclamation from Authority, I evade answering Impertinent questions. Heavens If goods do not arrive soon what will be come of me—I have lost several stone wt. of flesh within the 20 days.¹ He further complained that entire villages of Indians had journeyed to Detroit, “impatient to know what is to become of them and their lands, and, to request a supply of goods so long promised them.” During a council he held with the Wabash, he complained they were very impertinent, “using expressions not proper to be committed to paper.” Almost in desperation the Colonel exclaimed that he had written repeatedly representing his dilemma, and now hoped that orders were on the way directing him how to act, “in what, in all probability will be a most critical situation.”

Captain Daniel Robertson at Michilimackinac was not so much concerned about fresh supplies of goods, for he expected his post to be evacuated soon, but seemed very uneasy that his bills were not paid. In spite of exerting himself “to the utmost to decrease expenses in every line,” Robertson was “much hurt and concerned” when the government did not honor his accounts. He

¹ De Peyster to Sir Frederick Haldimand, June 18, 1782, British Museum, Additional Manuscripts (hereinafter cited as Add. MSS.), 21,783, p. 318; De Peyster to Robert Mathews, June 18, 1783, *Michigan Historical and Pioneer Collections* (Lansing, 1877 *et seq.*, hereinafter cited as *Mich. Hist. Colls.*) XI, 369.

maintained that the post expenses were "fifty Thousand Pounds less than last year and much more work done than ever—hitherto partly to my Ruin as my pay goes faster than it comes." This was often the experience of many a western official, confronted by most perplexing problems, and hundreds of miles away from the center of the government.

Official intelligence of the Treaty of Paris via New York reached Quebec and the Governor, General Haldimand, on April 26, 1783. This was his first intimation of what the new boundary was to be, and it was a considerable shock. Much concerned about the Indians, he advised the western officials to avoid publishing the terms. He ordered all labor upon fortifications to cease, and the transport of stores and provisions to be discontinued. Haldimand sensed, as did the merchants, the considerable loss to the fur trade by the surrender of the western posts. Nevertheless, this was not his greatest concern, as he often said, but what disturbed him most was the reaction of the Indians. Just what would they do when they understood that Britain had betrayed them by agreeing to deliver their territories to their "implacable" enemies? He therefore spent a great deal of energy in reconciling the Indians with the victorious Americans. Fairly consistent efforts, directed from Quebec, were made to show the red men that it was for their best interest to come to terms with their former enemy. "It will be a difficult task," wrote the general, "after what has happened to convince them of our good faith." He complained to the Secretary for Home Affairs, Lord Sydney (Thomas Townshend), that the Americans "in the exultations of their present success," were making no attempts to conceal their designs against the Indians.

Soon after the information about the treaty had been received, the Governor was embarrassed by a visit from Joseph Brant and another chief named John, who came

as delegates from the Six Nations. They had heard evil rumors and now wished an explanation of the terms of the treaty. Haldimand allayed the suspicions of his visitors with his usual astuteness, and ordered Sir John Johnson to Niagara to pacify the fears of the Indians, but his own mind was greatly troubled. Possibly the horrors of the Pontiac war, only twenty years before, caused Haldimand to shudder, and made him fully conscious of the urgent need of satisfying the red men.

With this idea in mind he discussed with Brant and the Indian Agent, Daniel Claus, the expediency of settling the Indians, who were deprived of their lands by the Americans, on the north side of Lake Ontario in the peninsula of southwest Ontario. This program was approved by Brant and some other leaders, but few Indians, in spite of their discontent, accepted the offer of the new lands. Every possible effort was now put forward to keep the tribes loyal to England, and especially to persuade them by increased presents that Britain had not done what the suspicious red men thought she had done. The union of the various tribes, developed during the War of Independence, was to be maintained. Brant was dispatched as a special agent of the Iroquois to the Creek and Cherokee tribes, while Alexander McKee among the Michigan tribes, and Simon Girty among the Ohio and Wabash Indians, used their influence to uphold British ascendancy.

Nevertheless, in spite of the Governor's endeavors the news of the treaty spread rapidly throughout the Western country and the Indians by "entire villages" came clamoring to the posts begging for supplies. This was exactly the state of affairs which Haldimand had foreseen when as early as May 7, 1783 he wrote Sydney:

My own anxiety at present arises from an apprehension of the effects which the Preliminaries will have upon the Minds of our Indian Allies, who will consider themselves abandoned to the resentment of an ungenerous and implacable Enemy; and who, in the exultation of their

present Success, are at no pains to conceal their designs against them.²

Haldimand had earlier advised De Peyster to inform the Indians that England could no longer assist them or "approve of their carrying war into the Enemy's country," but every possible aid would be given to "secure and defend their own against every Incursion of the Enemy." De Peyster found that, in general, the Indians were "well disposed" to follow such instructions as they received from time to time. He was of the opinion that the Virginians would first break the truce, and that all back settlers were "determined to exterminate the Indians."

The Indians were very bitter over the treaty and informed the British that they were a free people "subject to no power upon earth." They were allies of the King, but not his subjects, and therefore "he had no right whatever to grant away to the States of America, their rights or properties without a manifest breach of all Justice and Equity, and they would not submit to it." No doubt the Indians looked upon England's conduct as "treacherous and cruel," as "scandalous and dishonorable," and as "basely betraying" them without their consent; "an act," they claimed, "of cruelty and injustice that Christians *only* were capable of doing." General Allan MacLean deeply pitied the Indians, and wrote Haldimand that should they commit outrages at giving up these posts, it would by no means surprise him. Aside from assuring the Indians they would be cared for, and to cease making war and to return to their hunting, the post officials did their utmost to prove to their former allies that England had not forsaken them.

There was good foundation for Haldimand's apprehensions. Captain Robertson had found it necessary to use the "well affected Traders" in mounting a guard to protect his post. He insisted that the Indians had not abandoned their scheme of

attacking the fort. "However I will not be surprised by them," he wrote. Joseph Brant was in high dudgeon, for he believed that England and the Five Nations were desirous of leaving the western Indians "in the lurch." In great umbrage, Brant insisted that the English were "always too slow" offering "some excuse or other" for their delays. "You better say at once those goods [at Montreal] are not for the Indians, then you have a right to keep them where they are," he fumed. De Peyster was alert and cautious, using all his influence to keep the red men peaceful. He pled with the Indians to surrender their prisoners and to end further atrocities on the frontiers. He urgently requested his superiors for aid and orders, but in vain. At last, and in despair, he wrote McKee that the most they could do was to sit upon their "matts and smoke, or at most do no more than keep a lookout for our own Security." Haldimand sent Johnson to hold a council with the Six Nations at Detroit, hoping to calm their fears. Sir John held the conference on June 28, 1783, and addressing the braves, he said in part:

Although the King your Father has found it necessary . . . to conclude a long, bloody, expensive and unnatural war, by a Peace which seems to give you great uneasiness on account of the boundary Line agreed upon . . . you are not to believe, or even to think that by the Line . . . it was meant to deprive you of an extent of country, of which the right of Soil belongs to, and is in yourselves as Sole Proprietors. . . . Neither can I harbour an idea that the United States will act so unjustly or impolitically as to endeavor to deprive you of any part of your country under the pretext of having conquered it.³

But as time passed the Indians became more restless and the situation so serious that, in spite of former orders to observe the most rigid economy, Sir Guy Carleton, now Lord Dorchester, who had succeeded Haldimand in 1786, ordered Johnson to meet the Indian deputies from the upper country and make every possible effort to placate them. "Actions will best express

² Public Record Office, Colonial Office 42 (hereinafter cited as P. R. O., C. O. 42), XLIV, 240.

³ *Mich. Hist. Colls.*, XX, 177.

out the provisions of the treaty concerning the loyalists. These infractions were *ex post facto* excuses, but nevertheless strong ones. Even had England promptly and entirely carried out the treaty, surely it may be questioned whether Congress would have been able to compel the states to fulfill their obligations. Very little time elapsed after ratification by America before vexatious state laws made collection of *bona fide* debts impossible. But one must remember there was no Supreme Court in existence to declare state laws violating a treaty unconstitutional. It is true both sides nullified provisions of the treaty. The American excuse may be explained by political impotency rather than an executive order to neglect the settlement of 1783. There was a sincere effort made by Congress to carry out its obligations until it was clearly evident that the posts were not to be vacated.

The Americans lost no time in their efforts to secure the possession of the posts which the treaty stipulated would come within their boundaries. On May 1, of 1783, Congress directed the Secretary of War, Major General Benjamin Lincoln, to inform the Indian nations that the war had ceased, peace had been concluded, the posts would "speedily be evacuated," and that the United States would be "disposed to enter into friendly treaty with the different tribes." Accordingly two days later Lincoln appointed Major Ephraim Douglas of Princeton, New Jersey, to carry out the instructions of Congress. Douglas, accompanied by Captain George McCully, immediately set out for Pittsburgh, and from there through the Indian country to Detroit.

The commissioners arrived at Detroit July 4, where they were courteously received by Colonel De Peyster, to whom the message of General Lincoln was delivered. De Peyster professed a desire to be helpful and bring about pacific relations with the Indians, but politely refused to allow any publication of the commissioners' instruc-

tions. His excuse was that he had not had any orders to surrender the posts, and could not do so until authorized by his superiors.

The following day, July 5, Douglas again requested permission to speak to the Indians, pledging his word "to confine himself to the offer of Peace or choice of War, and the Invitation to Treaty." But the commandant was not impressed, and sent McKee to inform the Americans that he desired they should depart as soon as possible for Niagara.

Notwithstanding this refusal Colonel De Peyster invited Major Douglas to an Indian council on the 6th. There were assembled the chiefs of eleven tribes, but the American representative was not permitted to speak. De Peyster addressed the Chiefs, advising them to live in peace with the Americans and giving notice he would aid them against the people of the United States. The message from the Secretary of War was read, and with this Major Douglas had to be satisfied.

Frustrated in their efforts, the Americans left Detroit on the morning of July 7 for Niagara. De Peyster was considerably relieved when they departed. He wrote:

I have shewn them every civility consistent with my Duty, during their stay at this Place—and I have great reason . . . to be happy that they are embarked.

However great Enthusiasts (those Missionaries as they call themselves) may be, and however willing to risk martyrdom in the American cause, still it would bring an eternal slur upon me, should any drunken Indian, or any one whose suffering have been to great to have allowed him to listen to my Council, do them an ill turn. . . . Detroit is by no means a place for American Deputies to reside in until His Excellency's final orders are received.⁷

The peace embassy arrived in Niagara on the 11th. General MacLean graciously received them, but, as in Detroit, their efforts were futile and they left for home on the 16th.

⁷ De Peyster to MacLean, July 7, 1783, P. R. O., C. O. 42, XLIV, 439; Canadian Archives, Q. XXI, 350-51; *Mich. Hist. Colls.*, XX, 138.

Contemporary with the peace mission of Douglas was the effort made by Baron F. W. A. Von Steuben who, following orders from Washington, set out for Canada to arrange with Haldimand for the transfer of all the American territory still in British possession. Steuben was instructed to proceed westward as far as Detroit to inspect the various posts which would soon be evacuated. He arrived at Chambly on the 3rd of August and sent an aide-de-camp to Quebec giving notice of his mission.

General Haldimand arranged for a meeting at Sorel on the 11th of August. The Baron began by stating that "every object of Dispute between Great Britain and the United States" had been settled by the peace lately proclaimed. Although not authorized to demand the posts "within the limits of the United States occupied by the British," yet he hoped there would be no objection to his visiting them, in order that he might "make such arrangement for the interest of the United States as may be necessary when they shall be delivered up."

General Haldimand informed Von Steuben that although the United States might "consider the Provisional Treaty" as definitive, nevertheless, the sense he had of his own duty and the customs of war would not permit him to consider a cessation of hostilities in that light. He had received orders to discontinue hostile acts, which he had "punctually obeyed," and this he would continue to do. At such time as the ratification of peace was formally announced he would carry out every order he might receive with "the utmost punctuality and despatch." Until that time he could not permit the Baron to continue his journey westward, nor could he negotiate with him further for the posts. It seemed futile to continue their conversations, so Steuben soon set out for Philadelphia, but not until he wrote Haldimand a note of thanks for all the civilities "heaped upon him" by the General and his officers.

Haldimand was justified in his position, for the definitive treaty had not been

signed, and Steuben's mission was at least premature and as unfruitful as that of Douglas. Haldimand's actions were dictated by his sense of duty, for he had been informed "to do all in his power to conciliate the affections and confidence of the United States of America." Then how may one explain his attitude toward Steuben? The explanation he gave is found in a letter to Lord North wherein he mentioned the recent visit and very candidly admitted that he was playing for time. He wrote:

Many bad and no good consequences might have arisen from such premature discussion. The longer the evacuation is delayed, the more time is given our traders to remove their merchandise, or to convert it into furs, and the greater opportunity is given to the officers under my command to reconcile the Indians to a measure for which they entertain the greatest abhorrence.⁸

No further efforts were made in 1783, but in May, 1784, Governor George Clinton of New York sent an embassy to obtain possession of Fort Niagara. This was no more successful than the earlier efforts. The last American attempt to secure the posts was made in July of the same year when Secretary of War, General Henry Knox, sent Col. William Hull; but again Haldimand pleaded his lack of instructions. He declared to the Colonel that it was his private opinion that the posts ought not to be surrendered until the American states fulfilled the part of the treaty which concerned the loyalists. Haldimand felt that many of these had met "with the grossest ill treatment of every Kind, and for which they could not obtain the smallest redress." But Haldimand's real attitude was more clearly revealed in his correspondence with Lord North and Lord Sydney as has been shown. After Hull's failure the army officials dropped the whole matter, allowing the diplomats to settle the controversy. For it was apparent that by 1784 no move would be taken by England to evacuate the posts except as a part

⁸ Haldimand to North, August 20, 1783, Canadian Archives, Q, XXI, 390.

Expenses mounted higher and higher until Haldimand refused to sanction many bills presented to him.

Nevertheless, expenses continued. Prices were high at the posts and repairs were essential for safety. Johnson forbade the Indian Department to purchase fresh meat "not only on account of the shameful price . . . but as an article totally unnecessary, particularly at this time." He estimated the cost at three or four times the amount for which it could be sent down from Montreal, but added that McKee was doing his best to keep expenses down. During the critical year of 1793 Col. Richard England at Detroit felt himself "very awkwardly circumstanced" about issuing provisions for the Indian Department. His "private opinion" was that McKee should have everything he demanded for the use of the people under his charge, for he felt the requests were made with discretion, but found that his powers were limited. This refusal brought forth strong protests from Matthew Elliot and Lieut. Prideaux Selby of the Indian Department. Selby wrote:

I never was so much astonished as to hear from Elliott that Colonel England would allow no more provision to be sent to the rapids until he heard from the Gov'r—I conceive the Commanding officer wants no other authority than your requisition for whatever you may judge necessary for the Department . . . I have enclosed my thoughts on the subject which I would not hesitate one moment in dispatching to the Governor, and in case of absolute necessity, I would order Provisions to be brought or borrowed that the public service might not suffer from the ignorance or folly of one of its officers.¹¹

Rather strong language from an inferior officer, but Selby felt that the British control over the Indians was at stake. Prices were high in the back country. Flour cost £5 per hundred at Detroit in 1783. Other prices paid toward the close of the period were: corn at £1 per bushel, tobacco at 6d. per pound, cotton 2s. 2d., while salt which

cost 2s. 2d. at Montreal and 15s. at Kingston, sold for 40s. per bushel at Detroit.

Repairs were necessary at the posts as long as they were to be held. Robertson found that with the opening of spring in 1784, the wharf at Michilimackinac was broken to pieces, "so that no kind of Craft could be loaded or unloaded." He had it repaired, but "it was a very troublesome Jobe in very cold weather, and not a drop of Rum to give the workmen," he complained. By August the picketing of the fort, the road to it, and the wharf seemed to require "repairing after every shower of Rain and Gust of Wind." In 1792, Captain Gother Mann made a survey of the posts. He reported to Lord Dorchester that the cause for so many repairs at Michilimackinac was due to the fact that the works were "injudiciously designed" and were never half finished. "The only object," he wrote, "as to the Works, has been to keep the place in such a temporary state of repair and defense, as might make it looked to with some sort of respect by the Indians, and consequently give a proportional degree of safety and protection to the trade." It was estimated that £367 17s. 3d. would have to be spent to repair the "ruinous conditions" of the walls and the "perfectly rotten pickitting." England grumbled that the platforms of the fort were "so decayed as to be rendered useless, and only two Gun Carriages in the Garrison fit for Service." Other requests were made from time to time by the various officials connected with Michilimackinac, but in May of 1793 it was reported that the post had been so long neglected and so completely decayed, that "nothing short of an entire reestablishment on some new system can . . . answer any purpose."

Detroit fared somewhat better than many other western posts. Some of the "picketing" was renewed, small repairs to the barracks were made, and a new provision store was built. It was estimated in 1792 that it would cost £3,499 7s. 6d. to repair

¹¹ Selby to McKee, May 20, 1793, *Mich. Hist. Colls.*, XII, 52.

properly the wharf and works, and to put up the necessary buildings. This was prohibitive and only the essential repairs were sanctioned. Lord Dorchester had recommended to Henry Dundas the precautions necessary for defense if the posts were to be held, for Canada was one to fourteen in population as compared with the United States, he wrote. But England was engrossed in a war with France, and there was very little money to spend on forts which soon might be relinquished.

The situation in the Western country had yearly become more alarming for the United States. The fertile lands were inviting increasing numbers of settlers, who were isolated from the Eastern seaboard by the Appalachians. The Northwest was in the control of hostile Indian tribes who were naturally desirous of carrying on a war against those who encroached upon their lands. These were indeed critical years for the young American republic. Alert to the need of peace with the Indians, agents of congress were negotiating everywhere, and all the time, but in vain. At Fort Stanwix in 1784, at Fort McIntosh in 1785, at Fort Finney in 1786, and at Fort Harmar in 1789, earnest efforts were made to unravel the ugly problem, and to provide new boundaries which would make room for the white settlements beyond the old line. These treaties were to become mere scraps of paper, for the political union of the Indians was exceedingly loose and weaker than that of the Americans.

Meanwhile the trickle of immigrants continued and was growing into an angry stream. Upon the establishment of the new national government in the spring of 1789, President Washington decided to end negotiations and to demonstrate the power of the new government by a vigorous military movement. Accordingly General Josiah Harmar in 1790 was placed in command of a punitive expedition against the Miamis. The troops, nearly four-fifths of which were new levies of militia, advanced into the Valley of the Maumee, where they

destroyed several Indian villages and a considerable store of corn and other supplies. A small detachment was ambushed and badly cut up. Harmar's plan had been to push to the upper course of the Wabash, but so many horses had been stolen by the Indians that the expedition "petered out." Bad discipline prevailed, and as a result the campaign was a succession of blunders and failures. Harmar brought his troops back, firmly believing that he had given the Indians a severe lesson. What really happened was that the Indians were encouraged to think that they were more than a match for any forces which the pioneers could send against them and soon began once more the destruction of villages and the massacre of the inhabitants.

But more energetic and elaborate preparations were undertaken the following spring to wipe out the disgrace of Harmar's failure. The command was given to Arthur St. Clair, governor of the Northwest Territory. Congress voted two thousand troops for six months, and two small regiments of regulars. The recruits were without discipline and shamefully inefficient, while supplies were shockingly inadequate. St. Clair was ordered northward from Fort Washington (near the present Cincinnati) to the Indian villages on the Maumee River. Setting out on October 4, 1791, the army moved slowly through dense forests in favorable weather, but handicapped by discontent, desertion, and lack of discipline. On the night of November 3rd, the army camped on the eastern fork of the Wabash, some ninety miles north of Fort Washington. The next morning, the Indians burst unexpectedly upon the ill-equipped and poorly led Americans and inflicted a second Braddock's disaster. This crushing defeat crippled American military operations in the Old Northwest for about a year.

Naturally the American officials sensed the possibility of St. Clair's expedition causing some tension among the British officials at Detroit. Knox instructed St. Clair that "every measure tending to any

would cost £3,4997s. 18½*d.* to repair the posts in Michigan, including a few small new buildings. Year after year this same story had been repeated. Either some new building was required, or an old one was "rotten and insufficient," or the picketing was "daily tumbling down," or some ditching had to be done. Bills increased yearly from over £20,000 (this includes the Indian Department) in 1783, to such "prodigious" amounts by 1794 that the governor was in despair and refused to sanction some. It was Colonel England's opinion, while he was stationed in Detroit, that in spite of all the expense the Indians could not be relied upon for any defense of the country. It was Dorchester's belief that it would require some four or five thousand more men to protect Canada and the posts; and large amounts of naval stores, ten or twelve ships with a total of 150 guns for the lake service, 700 to 800 seamen, several frigates, and 6,000 men and a naval squadron at Halifax. Dorchester claimed Canada alone could withstand no contest with America, and certainly Nova Scotia and New Brunswick would be of no assistance. All of this at a time when England's energy and resources were daily concentrated more and more on the French Revolution. An impossible demand, and British statesmen were not stupid.

But the most important factor which brought about the cession of the posts was the movement undertaken by the Americans culminating in the successful campaign of General Anthony Wayne. During the larger part of 1792 and 1793, Wayne was busy recruiting and drilling the American army. In the meantime, the United States made a final effort to bring about a peaceful settlement with the tribes north of Ohio. Benjamin Lincoln, Timothy Pickering, and Beverly Randolph were appointed as commissioners and departed for the Northwest by way of Niagara in the spring of 1793. They arrived at the mouth of Detroit River the 21st of July, after having been delayed

for weeks by Governor Simcoe. Colonel England refused to allow the Americans to proceed to Detroit, so they disembarked on the Canadian side and were entertained at the home of Captain Elliott. Meanwhile McKee and his staff were holding a general council with all the tribes at the Rapids of the Maumee, for the purpose of uniting the Indians and to present unanimous terms to the Americans. For two weeks the commissioners remained on the shore of Lake Erie, unable to get passage across to the mouth of the Maumee where they could confer with the Indians. Thwarted on every hand by Simcoe's men, the commissioners finally departed for home. It seemed that a renewal of the Indian war was inevitable.

During the late fall and winter of 1793-1794, General Wayne began his march northward from the Ohio into the Indian territory, making his winter quarters on the site of St. Clair's disaster in 1791. The English interpreted Wayne's movements as a direct menace to Detroit. Deserters from the American army fled to Detroit carrying stories of Wayne's plan to fortify the Maumee and from thence to push on to capture the post. McKee urged Simcoe to fortify the old Miamis fort just below the Glaize. Simcoe had long sensed the strategic value of this location and advised Dorchester that the place be garrisoned and considerably strengthened. In February, 1794, Dorchester ordered Simcoe to occupy a position at the rapids of the Maumee with a garrison from Detroit. Just a week earlier the Governor had entertained a delegation of Indians in Quebec. He told them that the Americans did not desire peace, that they refused the King's offer of mediation, and hinted that the British and Americans would soon be at war. This address and the completion of the fort at the Miamis by Simcoe almost brought the two nations into war. Fortunately the British ministry disavowed Dorchester's address, sharply reprimanded him, and this eased the situation somewhat.

By the end of April, 1794, Simcoe had finished the fortifying of the Miamis post and had also placed some guns on Turtle Island at the mouth of the Maumee. These precautions would hinder Wayne in any advance upon Detroit, or in establishing communications via Lake Erie with the American settlers at Presque Isle. Simcoe was of the impression that Wayne's advance upon Detroit would surround that post, severing its intercourse with the Indians, and possibly turn them against the British. The fortifications at Miamis, the Lieutenant-Governor believed, would make it possible to prevent Wayne's march northward or at least greatly delay him. While if Wayne should attempt to move around the fort to the northwest, Simcoe declared he would use the entire garrison from Detroit, if necessary, and make an effort to cut Wayne's long line of communications.

But Wayne had no intentions of marching against Detroit. His real objective was to smash the Indians. In June, 1794, having been joined by some 1600 mounted Kentucky militia, he began his march from Fort Greenville. Near the junction of the Glaise and Maumee, he built some defenses which he named Fort Defiance. Then proceeding down the Maumee, he found, on August 18, a group of some 1300 Indians about two miles from the British fort. In an ambush of fallen trees, through which had grown a new forest, a natural protection difficult to break through, the Indians attacked the Americans. Wayne's men behaved excellently, and by a rapid movement of cavalry outflanked the savages, who retreated toward the fort where they expected to be received. But its gates were not opened to them, whereupon they disappeared into the forests. Thus occurred, on August 20, the battle of Fallen Timbers, as it was named, which soon brought a settlement to the Indian question that had embarrassed America since the Revolution.

Meanwhile, as Wayne advanced, the English officers at Detroit and Michili-

mackinac were making earnest efforts to unite the Indians and to make more effective their resistance to the American forces. "We have done everything in our power to hurry on the Indians to the Rapids," wrote one Detroit official. Detroit was almost stripped of ammunition, guns, and provisions by McKee, who begged headquarters for more supplies at once, "provided His Majesty's Posts are considered by His Excellency as objects of importance." Simcoe held that war was "inevitable" and felt that Wayne must be driven back rapidly. He also suggested attacking the United States in the west and on the seacoast, in order that it might be "effectually dismembered, and disabled from prosecuting those malignant and ambitious views," which in Simcoe's eyes were the foundation of America's policy.

Surely a crisis was imminent. After his victory, General Wayne remained in the vicinity destroying crops, huts, and other property of the Indians and the fur traders, within the very range of the guns of Fort Miamis. Inside the fort "torches hovered above the breeches of loaded cannon trained on the American cavalry," while outside the log walls were the American forces "flushed with their success and indignant at the recent encroachments of the British." In this dramatic and tense setting only the coolness of the commanders "prevented a precipitation of hostilities that might have set the whole frontier afire," and, as Professor S. F. Bemis asserts, possibly "destroyed the last chance for peace" between England and America. A war in 1794 would probably have been fatal to American nationality.

Major William Campbell, the English commander, sent a flag of truce to Wayne, asking the American general in what light he was to view Wayne's approaches so near his own garrison. Wayne replied that "without questioning the authority or propriety" of the interrogatory that his answer was the action of yesterday against the hoard of

Savages in the vicinity of your Post." To this Campbell sent back word that, although he was anxious to avoid hostilities, any further insults "offered to the British Flag flying at this Fort, by approaching it within pistol shot" should cease or it was his "indispensable Duty" to King and Country to meet further advance by armed forces. Wayne, expressing his surprise that England had built a fort within the "acknowledged limits of the United States," an act of "the highest aggression," requested Campbell to remove his forces to Detroit. But the British leader flatly refused to do this, replying that he was under military orders, and that the "impropriety" of his occupying the Miamis Fort should be "best left to the ambassadors of our different nations." Fortunately Wayne was wise and did not attack Campbell. For three days more he remained along the banks of the Maumee, destroying Indian crops and stores, also the buildings of McKee, against whom he had a particular grudge. This accomplished, the Americans withdrew to Fort Defiance, where they were in a position to prevent effectively any further depredations on the part of the Indians.

During the days that Wayne was on the Maumee the British in Detroit were passing many anxious hours. The news of the Indian defeat at Fallen Timbers brought consternation to the officers, for they feared that Wayne would march upon their post. The fort was in no condition to withstand an army with guns and the militia could not be depended upon. At the same time a fever was prevalent in the regular army, which caused the death of six men of the 24th Regiment during the summer of 1794. At one time 120 were on the sick list. These disorders left the men in a "very low debilitated state," unfit for duty, and made it impossible to send any help to Major Campbell at Miamis. The Indians would give no aid, as they were "in much confusion" and angry at "not receiving any assistance from the English." Possibly the

best picture of the uncertainty at Detroit was conveyed by Thomas Duggan, the storekeeper of the Indian Department who was mustered into the army. He wrote:

The Militia do duty here and I am just going the rounds, so shall leave this unfinished until my return. $\frac{1}{2}$ after 12 I am just returned from my rounds, nothing extraordinary, all is well at present, God knows how long it will be so, as there are a great number of disaffected persons here, it is reported the Americans have surrounded Fort Miamis and intend to attack it.¹⁴

Colonel England, the commander at Detroit, could not comprehend why Wayne did not march on Detroit instead of retreating. Especially "at a time that it would appear," he wrote, "he had effectually accomplished his purpose by defeating the Indians perfectly and by having the whole Country at his Command." The answer was that the United States never had any idea of using Wayne's army to attack the occupied posts, and the "excitable" Wayne did not dare, on his own responsibility, to commit himself to such a dangerous enterprise.

While General Wayne was carrying on his successful campaign against the Indians of the Old Northwest, the American Government had sent John Jay, in May of 1794, to London to carry on discussions leading to a settlement of the many disputes between the two countries. After several months of negotiations, on November 14, 1794, Jay affixed his signature to a treaty which has since borne his name,¹⁵ a treaty, in Admiral Mahan's words, of "epochal significance."

Of most significance for the history of the Old Northwest was the settlement by this treaty of the long controversy over the boundaries. Article two stipulated that the evacuation of the frontier posts should take

¹⁴ Duggan to Joseph Chew, August 23, 1794, *ibid.*, C, vol. 247, p. 244; *Mich. Hist. Colls.*, XII, 123.

¹⁵ These negotiations are fully and scholarly discussed in S. F. Bemis, *Jay's Treaty; a Study in Commerce and Diplomacy* (New York, 1923), chap. XII. See especially chap. XVIII in Frank Monaghan's definitive biography, *John Jay* (New York, 1935).

place on, or before, June 1, 1796, and that all settlers and traders residing within the jurisdiction of the posts should continue to enjoy the full rights of their property. Citizens living within the area of the United States might continue their British allegiance or become American subjects, one year being allowed for them to make a decision. Any person who had failed to make a declaration of intention at the end of the year was to be considered a citizen of the United States.

The withdrawal from the posts was not to disturb the "usual course of communication and commerce to the southward of the Lakes" between the Indian peoples and Canada. British subjects were to have the right to pass and repass freely over the boundaries with their goods and merchandize. In other words the treaty provided for "unlimited freedom of internal trade and communication between the two Canadas and the United States."

On August 3, 1795, General Wayne concluded a treaty with the western Indian tribes, known as the Treaty of Greenville. It ceded to the United States most of the area of the present state of Ohio, reserving to the savages a broad strip of land on the south shore of Lake Erie between the Cuyahoga and Maumee Rivers. This treaty was the forerunner of numerous other Indian cessions which, during the next fifteen years, yielded a large part of the Old Northwest to the United States. Article eight of the Treaty of Greenville provided that all persons trading with, or living among, the Indians must have licenses procured from the proper American officials. In the eyes of the British this provision was in direct violation of the Jay Treaty, which guaranteed free participation in the Indian trade to the citizens of both nations. Lord Grenville advised Phineas Bond, England's representative in America, to demand an explanation for this infraction of the treaty. Dorchester was also advised to delay all plans for the withdrawal from the posts

until the problem was satisfactorily adjusted. This incident was settled, however, and an agreement was reached on May 4, 1796, which stated that no part of any subsequent treaty should be interpreted as impairing the trading rights provided by the Jay Treaty.

Dorchester had received orders in 1795 from Whitehall to make arrangements with the United States for the evacuation of the posts. Britain was anxious for the entire matter to be settled amicably, as was shown by the Duke of Portland's orders. He wrote Dorchester:

You are to be very careful [in carrying out the treaty] that all your communications on this subject, shall be couched in the most temperate and conciliatory terms, and that, in general, your conduct should be such as to manifest the most earnest desire, on His Majesty's part, to give the fullest effect, as well to the particular Stipulations of the Treaty as to its general spirit and principles, provided that on the part of the United States, the same good faith and liberality are shown.¹⁶

It was in this spirit that Dorchester carried out his part of the evacuation.

In order to protect England's western areas new forts were erected to take the place of the old ones which were to be delivered to the Americans. These usually were placed opposite or near the old posts, as the fort near Detroit was built a few miles down and across the river at Amherstburg. General James Wilkinson representing the United States, addressed a letter to Colonel England at Detroit on May 27, 1796, asking when it would be convenient for the British to withdraw their troops "from the Territory of the United States?" To this request, the Colonel replied that he had not yet received final orders from Dorchester, but as soon as they arrived, and he did not believe they would be "unnecessarily delayed," he would immediately communicate them to Wilkinson. On June

¹⁶ Portland to Dorchester, January 13, 1796, P. R. O., C. O. 42, CV, 24-25.

1, George Beckwith, the Adjutant, sent orders to the post commanders to vacate their posts. They were to leave one captain, two subalterns, and fifteen men at Detroit; while one officer and twenty men were to remain at Michilimackinac, to act as a guard for the protection of the works and public buildings until the American troops arrived.

During the summer and fall of 1796 the principal posts were delivered to the United States forces. This definitely ended the British régime in Michigan and the Northwest and brought to a close the long diplomatic struggle which had been continuous since the negotiations preceding the Treaty of Paris of 1783. Timothy Pickering's summary of the delivery of the posts well described the situation. He wrote:

By this time all the British posts must have been delivered up to the troops of the United States, except perhaps the remote one of Michilimackinac. The deliveries, as far as we have rec'd intelligence, have been made in the most handsome manner, on the part of the British.¹⁷ All the records indicate that the British troops carried on "in the most handsome manner," and no unfortunate complications arose to mar the final American occupation.

We have herewith reviewed certain basic events and facts which effected the surrender of the posts by Great Britain in 1796. All of these tended to have more or less influence, but it is the opinion of the author that there were two movements of most significance. One was the irresistible

movement of the land-hungry American into the trans-Allegheny west, and the other was the shifting of the major field of the fur trade farther into the Northwest, largely within British territory. The solution of the frontier problems in a peaceful manner was fortunate, as America's first President, Washington, so well visualized. War would have been tragic for the young nation just in its "swaddling clothes," with only a loose union and a mere shadow of government. On the other hand, peace was not unwelcome to England. The might of that great empire was sorely tried during the years of the French Revolution and the long Napoleonic Wars. It was very expensive to maintain garrisons in the vast hinterland and to send great quantities of presents to the red population "whose appetite was almost as large as the area over which it roamed." History was made for the young republic in general, and for Michigan in particular, as well as for the British nation, by the peaceful smoothing of the "raw edge" which the frontier posts had caused.

Thus the curtains were finally drawn on the last act, the area known as the Old Northwest passed into history, and emerged soon as the States of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Within a few short decades the fur trade was a thing of the romantic past. In its place today we find a great population deriving its livelihood from the fertile soil, the manufactures, the forests, the railroads, the mines, and the avenues of commerce.

¹⁷ Pickering to Rufus King, August 8, 1796, Rufus King MSS., Henry Huntington Library.



